

# The Illinois Miners Strike.

The capitalists are learning that while they may scare union officials by use of the courts and other government forces, into making agreements which betray the interests of the workers, that does not mean that the workers on the job are going to meekly accept such betrayal.

At their convention in Cleveland last year the coal miners drew up a program covering the conditions which they thought should prevail in the industry in order to give them a decent living and tolerable working conditions. They instructed their officials to call a strike if their demands were not granted by a certain date.

The strike was called. The conditions were such that the workers were bound to win. The strike was called during the winter months. A general shutdown of industry, cold and suffering, were threatened after the strike had been underway only a few weeks.

Then the government stepped in. It secured its famous injunction tying up the union funds and threatening the union officials with prison sentences. The men were ready to fight to a finish for their demands in spite of the governmental action, but the union officials compromised, proving themselves traitors to the instructions they had received from the convention.

The award made by the commission which President Wilson appointed to arbitrate the strike did not satisfy the miners, but they were forced to accept by the action of their officials.

Since that time there have been rumblings of discontent throughout the coal fields, which broke out in the strike of the Illinois miners.

The situation in the coal industry is seriously threatening the whole industrial system. The inability of the railroads to furnish cars for the shipment of coal had already caused a shortage which was becoming acute. Coal shipments to the northwest are far behind those of previous years and supplies which the big coal consuming industries have on hand is limited. Even without the strike the prospects for the coming winter were bad.

Since the government has now become the agent for the capitalist class in all disputes which threaten the whole industrial system, it was but natural that President Wilson acted at once in this situation. He promptly wired the striking miners that the strike was "a violation of the terms of the award of the Bituminous Coal Commission and your agreement with the Government that the findings of the commission would be accepted as final and binding."

It will probably be a surprise to most of the miners to hear that they had made an agreement with the government which was final and binding. The rank and file of the

miners union were not consulted in making that agreement. In fact it was a betrayal of the instructions they had given their officials at their convention.

Also, it is like rubbing salt in an open wound to throw in the face of the miners the immorality of violating a contract, when that contract was forced upon them by the government threatening them with imprisonment and with use of its soldiers against them.

The important point about the strike, however, is the fact that the union officials have arrayed themselves against the workers. President Lewis of the United Mine Workers, joins President Wilson in denouncing the workers for going on Strike. This betrayal of the rank and file has become quite the custom in labor disputes. The workers on the job are becoming militant. They are not satisfied with half measures, and the reason they are not satisfied because they are the ones who are up against it. The union officials, holding fat jobs, have lost touch with the workers in the mine. They are becoming part of the capitalist machinery for keeping the workers in check. This is the part that the Executive Committee of the United Mine Workers and President Lewis is playing in the Illinois strike.

The experience in the present and previous similar situations will probably teach these workers that the only way they can make gains for themselves is by throwing out their reactionary officials. The first step in this direction is to unite the militant groups among the strikes. This can be done by the miners creating an organization which will represent the militant rank and file. The shop committee system applied to the mines, and these committees linked together in local councils offers them a method of combating those who betray them.

KARACHI, India.—About five hundred men of railway carriage and wagon workshop struck work and marched in procession through cantonments and civil lines to Burns Gardens where they joined other railway strikers of the locomotive department, and were addressed by strike leaders. Altogether there are 2,000 railway strikers at Karachi.

The North Western Railway strike in the Punjab is still continuing. The government is spending money most lavishly to bring about a settlement, and is coercing the strikers into submission. It is also throwing out strikers with their wives and children from their homes — the railway tenements. The strikers have been reduced to heart-rending privations. Homeless, penniless and foodless, these unfortunate workers and the members of their families are moving about like walking skeletons. And yet they refuse to yield, and are willing to accept nothing but